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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BUCHAREST 001563

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/NCE - WILLIAM SILKWORTH

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [SOCI](#) [RO](#)

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER CONFIRMS RESIGNATION; COMMITS TO NEW ELECTIONS

REF: A. BUCHAREST 1557

[B](#). BUCHAREST 1521

[C](#). BUCHAREST 1511

[D](#). BUCHAREST 1433

[E](#). BUCHAREST 1529

Classified By: Political Section Chief Robert S. Gilchrist for Reasons
1.4 B and D

[1](#). (C) Summary: Prime Minister Calin Popescu-Tariceanu July 13 announced he would officially step down from office early next week and that the government has begun plans for snap parliamentary elections. The announcement followed a special joint session of parliament and a July 12 meeting among senior political leaders meant to iron out differences over stalled judicial reform legislation. Ruling Liberal-Democratic (PNL-PD) contacts continue to stress that the alliance is committed to move forward with new elections. However, the PNL-PD must still secure a majority of votes in parliament to force an early poll. End Summary.

[2](#). (SBU) In the latest turn in what Romanian media now call the "Electoral Crisis," PM Tariceanu reaffirmed July 13 that he would officially step down following a planned trip to Brussels on July 18. Tariceanu stated that procedures for early elections would also begin at that time. In explaining the rationale for his decision, the PM stressed that the PNL-PD does not have a sufficient majority to "permit it to make necessary reforms." He pointed to "insufficient will in the Parliament" to foster judicial reform, the issue on which his government is basing its decision to move toward new elections.

[3](#). (C) Tariceanu also asserted that none of the conditions were met that he had set the night before during the meeting of senior political leaders convened by President Traian Basescu (Ref A). These conditions included meaningful judicial reform, amendment of the law governing the Constitutional Court, and a national referendum to modify the constitution to allow the Parliament to overrule the Court. According to Embassy contacts, Tariceanu's commitment to forcing new elections had never wavered. Sources in both the presidential palace and prime minister's office tell us that snap elections are "more likely than ever."

Where There's a Will, There's a Way?

[4](#). (C) Tariceanu's statement followed 24-hours of intense political negotiations, many of which were ostensibly intended to resolve the impasse precipitating calls for elections. According to Embassy contacts, the meeting convened by President Basescu late July 12 did not address core concerns in any substantial way. According to senior Democratic Party (PD) deputy Cristian Radulescu, the lawmakers merely agreed to devise new legislation that would pass constitutional muster. Other individuals present said that Basescu urged parliament to "find a way" to pass justice reform legislation. Indeed, Basescu declared at the beginning of the meeting "solutions can be found if there is political will" to do so. One Embassy contact cynically noted there was "no will on either side." The PNL-PD "clearly wanted new elections;" the PSD was unwilling, if not incapable, of overriding the Constitutional Court decision and meeting all of the PNL-PD's demands.

[5](#). (C) According to PNL senator Nicolae Popa and other contacts, PNL and PD leaders caucused "all night" July 12 to devise ways to pass justice reform legislation - and to discuss the overall political situation. By early morning, they were "even more convinced of the need for new elections." The morning of July 13, senior Presidential Advisor Claudiu Saftoiu stated matter-of-factly to PolChief that the President will announce the interim cabinet following Tariceanu's July 18 resignation. He said Basescu would offer his "fullest support" to the caretaker government and that there would be "absolutely no interruption" in meeting obligations for EU accession or for providing what he characterized as "a stable environment for international investors."

[6](#). (C) The afternoon of July 13, Parliament voted in joint session to adopt a "re-phrased" version of the justice reform

legislation. Delegate Minister and PNL-PD deputy Cristian David told PolChief that none of the revisions adequately addressed the government's concerns, but that it was better than nothing. In any event, David said the PNL-PD is "still intent on elections."

Iliescu Reemerges

17. (C) Press commentators and Embassy contacts continued to note internal divisions within the PSD, with competing factions in the party supporting or opposing new elections. Most notably, however, former President Ion Iliescu has reemerged publicly to a degree not seen since his unsuccessful bid for the party leadership in April. His primary tack has been to criticize the PNL-PD and Basescu for focusing on partisan politics at a time when the country is beset by torrential flooding in several areas. Iliescu publicly urged Tariceanu to renounce his decision to resign - and called on Basescu, in coordination with the Supreme Council for National Defense (CSAT), to declare a "state of emergency" in response to the flooding. Iliescu noted that the Constitution forbids dissolution of parliament during a state of emergency. Nastase also told journalists that he opposed early elections. PSD President Mircea Geoana, however, reaffirmed that the party is "ready" for early elections.

18. (C) Comment: Tariceanu's confirmation of his resignation moves Romania closer to new elections. However, neither he nor his alliance have charted a clear path for overcoming the constitutional hurdles that must be crossed in coming weeks. This will require creative politicking, with risk at any juncture of being derailed by small parties opposed to elections, fatigued legislators, last minute dealmaking, or a public backlash against what may appear to be cynical political maneuvering. End Comment.

19. (U) Amembassy Bucharest,s reporting telegrams are available on the Bucharest SIPRNET Website:
www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/bucharest.
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